

Jan Fischer's Family



This is a photograph of our family sitting on the grass during a trip somewhere. It was taken in 1923. Mom (Julie Fischer, nee Lederer) looks very willful, Dad (Richard Fischer) looks as if nothing is up, and I'm there, about a year old, in the lap of a delightful young blond girl. Next to me is my brother Herbert. This snapshot clearly shows how things were. This picture talks. I don't even have to tell you anything, it's all "written" there.

My dad was a successful businessman and made a lot of money. He could therefore afford to hire a babysitter after I was born. Dad's uncontrollable weakness - for the tender sex - later became one of the causes for the sad end to our family.

My father's German agency prospered nicely. Dad even bought a car - a Skoda. It had extremely big head-lamps and looked very imposing. A chauffeur also came with the car. It was a company car and he used it during the week for his work, but on Sundays it came to Tynska Street. A chauffeur would open the doors and our family would set off on an excursion.

My mom was melancholic and withdrawn by nature. I don't know if she was like that when my father married her, but that's how I knew her. Although she only had a basic education, she was an avid reader, with an interest in quality literature, even books on philosophy. I cannot say what she got out of the books, but although she was no intellectual, she was always very moderate and thoughtful in her views.

Our family was assimilated, so we had no direct connection with Jewish traditions. We weren't observant, didn't eat kosher food, and didn't go to the synagogue. As a family we were traditionally aware of our Jewishness, so it was respected but not celebrated. I knew I was a Jew, except in those days knowing you were a Jew meant something completely different from what people think today. It wasn't anything particularly special, for we were surrounded by people like us. It wasn't anything out of the ordinary; it was just like you were a member of Sokol or something. You were a Jew, so you were a Jew. We weren't practicing Jews. We kept company with Jews who were assimilated like us.